

YUKI KONDO! KING of Pancrase! AKIRA HOKUTO! Queen of the Ass-Stompers! KOSHINAKA! KING OF WRESTLERS! MEN'S TEIOH! Bucket of Blood! KOJI KANEMOTO! KING OF PUNK! and other stuff I watched this week!

Howdy!

WELCOME TO DEATH VALLEY DRIVER VIDEO REVIEW #40!!

I got a FAT-ASS tape from GLENN! (My Friend! My Conscience!:) There was a PLETHORA of QUALITY, QUALITY wrestling this last month and Glenn served up the most fantabulous of it! WOO-HOO!

[PANCRASE from Tokyo Bay NK Hall 4/27/97]

This just kicked ass. Yuki Kondo vs Masakatsu Funaki for the King of Pancrase title was absolutely lovely. Kondo is 21 years old and is about to ascend to shootstyle GodHood if he gets past Bas Rutten- which I'm supposing will be the next step (where Bas will tear him a very large new one, but WHAT THE HELL! HE'S 21 and already the fifth KING OF PANCRASE! WOO-HOO!) Funaki is one of the codgers of Pancrase and he's pretty flashy. He's never been one of my faves considering the mountain of rulingness to choose from in Pancrase, though I didn't get irritated with him until he talked shit about TAKA Michinoku having a Pancrase match. After those cracks, I'm glad Yuki dropped him like a punk. This match was awesome. Kondo beats Funaki by having a deeper game plan than Funaki and I'm thinking Funaki couldn't quite figure what to do effectively against the submission prodigy. Funaki basically spent the match attempting to get Kondo in an ankle submission and actually got a Pancrase-point on his fifth attempt forcing Kondo to go for the ropes; Yuki countered the other attempts by twisting out of it like an alligator ripping the head off of a sheep. In-between these ankle submission attempts, Funaki was totally ineffective at getting anything on Yuki- as Yuki was Taktarovesquely counter everything from the bottom in the guard position. Yuki wore him down this way and set Funaki up perfectly by getting Funaki in the guard position- where he didn't seem comfortable against the youngster. Yuki started to get Funaki on his back by offering to trade kicks with him and Funaki hit the mat immediately, which I thought was strange, since I figured striking would be a Funaki advantage in this match. Whenever Yuki would get Funaki on his back, he would work for the cross arm-breaker, starting below the shoulder. After a couple of attempts, Yuki takes a batch of steam out of Funaki with some sweet kicks and you see Yuki's eyes light up. He gets Funaki in the guard position, stakes Funaki's head with his knee (obscuring his view) and, while working on his left arm, fast as HELL switches to the arm that Funaki was countering the Cross-Arm Breaker with and gets the CAB on his RIGHT arm and gets the win after fifteen minutes. This ruled. I'm wondering if there was one of those behind the scenes stipulations, that are rumored to happen in Pancrase from time to time, where they decided before the match to keep it on the mat. I dunno. Yuki won and it ruled! And what a Phat-ass belt!:) Bas Rutten's match showed him with some ringrust as he didn't exactly stomp a mudhole in Kunioku like one would expect. Kunioku did the smart thing and kept Bas on the mat and avoided getting his lungs kicked out by the Ruttenmeister. This was pretty edited and Bas wins on points, 1-0. This was better than I was expecting. The TAKA Michinoku vs Yamamiya match was interesting, not

that the outcome was all that in question. TAKA holds up pretty well, lasting seven minutes with a guy who- though way down the rungs of Pancrase- still actually legit wrestlers 24-7. The closest TAKA gets to this level of action is his excursions into BattlARTS where I don't think it would prepare you for the ring of Pancration.:) TAKA basically escapes various rides by Yamamiya- with Yamamiya getting pissed off at the lack of offense attempted by TAKA. TAKA finally succumbs to a twisty armlock that looked like it REALLY sucked- at sevenish minutes. You need this tape if you dig this type of stuff at all. AWESOME!

[GAEA Champ Forum 5/24/97]

This had the GREAT Akira Hokuto vs KAORU rematch. Akira Hokuto (despite her WCW matches:)) is having a true renaissance in GAEA as she is just kicking folks' asses these days and this match was great because it had KAORU in it- the most underrated wrestler in Women's wrestling. Not only is she beautiful, she can do ALL JAPAN level suplexes, is the most lucha-influenced of the GAEA women, and can actually do a moonsault so breath-taking that you actually giva a damn about the move again. She also sells like a motherfu*ker, takes hellish bumps and is totally selfless when it comes to furthering the ends of her promotion. Heck. Maybe she's the most underrated wrestler of any gender. This match had everything. The main point of coolness is the All-pervasive psychology that Akira has always supplied, mixed in with the highspots that were set-up beautifully by both ladies and the hellish ending where each tries to kill the other. Akira sets the tone by Beyond-the-REALM-of-the-T-Bone-TAZplexing KAORU directly on her neck and then pulling her up at the two count, which was pretty bitchy for someone who just threw in with OZ Academy. After that it moved into the body of the match with KAORU buying enough time to recover and mount an offense. The first counteroffensive by KAORU is countered by a well-timed somersault plancha by Akira off the turnbuckle. After hitting a couple of Lucha rollups and moonsault variations that only KAORU can hit:) KAORU then works to her next offensive by hitting triple backdrop drivers- of which Akira kicks out. An irritated KAORU hits her ass-stomping Michinoku Driver II version (MORE NECK!:)), the Excalibur and Akira survives that. Akira hits her Tiger Driver 91 version out of desperation and hits a cross-body Northern Lights Bomb that I had never seen before, and retains the WCW belt. Postmatch, the young girls of GAEA jump Hokuto and beat the crap out of her for turning on Chigusa. The rest of the Champ Forum set up KAORU hating Chigusa's guts (I think) by showing the fall from grace(I think:)) of KAORU protege, Nakano . GAEA RULES THE FRIGGIN WORLD. Get ALLLLL this.

[MICHINOKU PRO Champ Forum 5/10/97]

This was a lot of fun, in that it wasn't the usually guys from MP. This was the FMW-assisted show when all the bigboys were at one the New Japan Dome shows. The first match is a good little Lucharesu (TM-DARK CHEETAH! HAIL CHEETAH!) throwaway with Yone Ginjin (Yep. That guy.) and Yakushiji vs Flying Kid Ichihari and Solar. This was a WHOLE lot like MP was when I first started getting into it- before it got state-of-the-art great- back when they would cover up for any lack of skill with being charming and funny. The better example of this was the main event as Hayabusa continues his streak of being in decent matches and not acting like a big pansy.

He tags with Naniwa (who carries the majority of the match) and TigerMask IV as they take on the truly FAT-AS-ALL-GET-OUT Super Boy, TAKA Michinoku and Funaki. This was very meat and potatoes as they did lots of lucha spots that have fallen out of favor in recent months in MP. Naniwa was pretty awesome, as he and TAKA did the main stuff as the other guys did their highspots and stayed out of the way- with Hayabusa kinda being special guest star as he had a integral part in the match but was less involved than TAKA and Naniwa. Super Boy should be famous and adored. He was as good in this match as he was as the Convict in the Mask Tournament. The finish involves a GREAT sequence involving beating the hell out of TAKA Michinoku with Hayabusa's new neat suplex and powerbomb variations combined with the double spinning Doctorbombs perfected by THE WAYYYYY Too YOUNG TO BE THIS GOOD EL GRAN NANIWA! Yeah. You could get this. It's not KDX vs Sasuke-feud great, but its a good change of pace from the main style of Michinoku Pro. I dug it more than I thought I would. Even the Shinzaki/Bobby Blaze match didn't make me want to die.

[MICHINOKU PRO Champ Forum- 5/17/97]

THis is more back to normal as fun time ends and hardcore kick ass wrestling kicks back in. It starts with a FANTABULOUS installment of the I'M SASUKE AND I HATE THAT DICK TOGO feud with Naniwa, Hamada and Sasuke mixing it up with Hanzo Nakajima, Dick Togo and Shiryu-replacement and now full-time MPer- Funaki. Hanzo has improved- instead of actively sucking out loud, he has reach the point of not evoking any response from me to anything he does- which is a step up from the active loathing I have been harboring for him for two years. BRAVO Hanzo!:) The rest- well you know the drill- GREAT! GREAT! GREAT! The second match was an odd role reversal. The feud that brought TAKA Michinoku to prominence was when he feuded with the heavily (over)pushed TigerMask IV. TAKA showed that he could take fat fat bumps and take a beating and tell a story and do everything else a potentially great wrestler should do. This match- a title defense by TAKA of his Independent Jr belt- shows how far he has lapped TMIV as they basically SWITCH ROLES from those established in the first feud. TAKA is the hotshot guy who is gonna be around a while and suddenly TMIV is the unknown quantity trying to find his way. I noticed this when TMIV does the challenge to kick his knee that TAKA made to him way back when. TAKA tears him a new one. WOO-HOO! The main event I wasn't expecting was five alarm blade job by MEN'S TEIOH as he challenged for Delfin's CMLL WelterWeight Title. I can't really remember much else other than Delfin being the greatest fuc*ing wrestler on any given day in the world and that MP is not afraid to steal from ANY style as they have a full-blown US of A ref bump to set up the finish. GET ALLLLLLLLL this.

[NEW JAPAN TV 5/24/97 (5/3 Osaka Dome)NEW JAPAN TV 5/10 (5/3 Osaka Dome) NEW JAPAN TV 5/17/97 (5/3 Osaka Dome)]

This was the best dome show of the series I'd say. The masterpiece of this is the AWWWWEEEEESSSOOMME ten-man match which combined the two big junior feuds of NJ and MP with Togo, Nakajima, Teioh, Kanemoto and Ohtani against Hamada, Sasuke, Delfin, Samurai and Honaga. Koji Kanemoto is SO good in this match and the Great Sasuke is SO good in this match and it is incredible how they synthesized the two divergent Jr

Heavyweight styles in to this match. NJ JrHVVWT's work stiff as shit and Koji was kicking the fudge out of everybody. Him in with Sasuke should have been a harbinger of a reelingly great feud. They should give Koji the J-Crown just because I also remember how great he was when he was in with Delfin also. Everybody was feeling it as it went from slightly controlled MP ten man type of match with lots of fast in-ring highspots to NJ vs MP "who can work stiffer" pissing contest. Then, this hits the transcendent point where HONAGA (who is very much back from the dead) DOES A PERFECT ARN ANDERSON IMPERSONATION of dragging Nakajimas face across the ropes and draws in Otani into the corner and they start beating the crap out of him and this brings Kanemoto in who goes over and fights like a son of a bitch, which brings over everybody else and I SWEAR TO GARSH! they simulate the greatest bench-clearing brawl in history. This leads up to an seamless highspotfest that leads up to the KDX side setting Honaga up for a four step combo into a PHAT-ASS Senton by Togo. HOLY GARSH! This is my match of the year candidate until someone gets that EMLL 16 man match onto my doorstep. Also on this was Koshinaka vs Kengo Kimura and Koshinaka proved that he is the king of the ring by pulling a really good match out of the older than the earth itself, Kengo. Koshinaka just gives and gives and gives in his matches so that you ALWAYS (unless Muta is involved) give a crap about them and how its finally gonna get resolved. Koshinaka teases his "Gotta match, bud?" finisher throughout all the while getting Kimura to work his ass off doing a lot Jr heavyweight roll-up sequences. After the Koshinaka "world's gentlest powerbomb" Koshinaka hits his toprope finisher, which more than kicks ass. Kojima has arrived and I come to this conclusion after suffering through his matches against the wolfpack last year to actually coming to look forward to his matches these days and he actually makes the tag title switch watchable though it contained two real stiff in Kensuke Sasaki and Nakanishi and the zillion year old Chosyu. And I dig his Dragon Sleeper. JDW says its his fighting spirit that got him over and I'm starting to see that as finally being combined with enough other elements to put him at a point where I would actively start seeking out his next matches. His ascent to goodness started in that Nakanishi/Kojima vs Hashimoto/Hirata HashSTOMPfest where Kojima REALLY got his ass handed to him by both of the elder guys. It's hard to hate a guy who can take that kind of beating and he got better from there. The nWo stuff on these is not good- though the Giant/Luger vs Norton/BufF match was almost good. The Giant worked his big fat ass off in this match and Norton showed why he makes sense in a Japanese context- being the American Strongman who can deliver on the feats of strength as he suplexes the Giant. BufF is FREAKING GREAT again in front of the Osaka Dome crowd as I think he has finally found his niche- sort of a weird twist on the Benoit-goes-to-Japan effect- where one goes to Japan to figure out what to do to get yourself over in the US. BUFF IS ELECTRIC! It all goes for naught as Luger- who DID really really try- just sucked the life out of this match. The six man with Nash and Hall was lifeless though Hall made a good attempt at getting a semblance of something good out of the useless Steiners. The Syxx/nWo Sting vs Yasuda/Iizuka match was kinda neat, if not actually good. The Liger/Fujiwara vs Inoki/Sayama was a throwaway, with Sayama being the spryest of the three ultracodgers in the ring. Liger is wasted, though his parts with Sayama were kinda neat if a bit sloppy. Inoki gets another crappy win with another crappy finisher. Despite this, get this baby for the 10-man at least. And the Ishizawa/Yamazaki match REALLY REALLY REALLY sucked green donkey lungs.:) WOO-HOO!

NEXT WEEK (TSUNEKAWA DISCLAIMER!:)) MAYBE!: MORE LOREFICE TAPE MADNESS!
RINGS! UWFi! LUCHA! LUCHA! LUCHA!

CHEETAH~!

Dean Rasmussen, Digging Shiratori since the moment I saw her face.:)

"If you are cold I'll bring you heat like I brought the world my funky beat."
-RUN-DMC "Raising Hell"